Cryptozoology, 11, 1992, 51–69
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SOME UNPUBLICIZED AUSTRALASIAN "SEA SERPENT" REPORTS

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ABSTRACT: Thirteen reports of unidentified marine animals from Australian and Papua New Guinean waters, dating from 1877 to 1981, are presented. One 1874 report from the Atlantic Ocean, but published only in Australia, is also included. Although all but one of these reports were originally recorded in various newspapers, they have generally been overlooked by cryptozoological investigators, and have not appeared in anthologies. Where it has been possible to locate the original witnesses, significant extra details have been obtained. One report appears to have been a hoax. A few others are open to question, or suffer from lack of detail. Nevertheless, the evidence strongly suggests that several different unknown species have been sighted, including some not referable to known "sea serpent" types.

INTRODUCTION

News items of a cryptozoological nature are not well publicized in Australia. In part, this may be due to the national character. Despite their easy-going exterior, Australians tend to be intolerant of deviant opinions. Ridicule is likely to be the immediate reward of both the person reporting the experience and the newspaper taking it seriously.

The result is that cryptozoological items are often first reported in small, regional newspapers, and only later, if at all, do they reach the big capital city dailies. Even then, they are often abbreviated. While this practice may discourage wild and ill-conceived reports, the fact remains that the average Australian has little chance of learning the full story behind a particular sighting, and people overseas even less.

The incidents presented in this paper, with one exception (item 14), were originally reported in the press. They have not, however, previously appeared in anthologies. In particular, careful cross-checking has been made with the volume *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents* (Heuvelmans 1968), it being assumed that anything not recorded in that encyclopedic work is unlikely to be well-known in the Northern Hemisphere. Heuvelmans' classification of "sea serpent" types has also been used where appropriate.

The full texts of the newspaper reports have been deposited in the archives of the International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC). In four cases, it was possible to locate the original witnesses and obtain further information. In each case, whether contact was made by correspondence or by interview, care was taken to avoid leading questions.

The Reports

1) Carlisle Castle, 1874. This was mentioned by Heuvelmans (1968), but no details were given. It is really a North Atlantic sighting, but the report was only published in Australia. This account is from the *Sydney Morning Herald,* January 8, 1875:

> A SEA SERPENT.—A Sea Serpent (says the [Melbourne] Argus) has again made its appearance, it having been seen by those on board the ship Carlisle Castle, during the voyage from London to this port. From the statements of those on board, it appears that at 6 a.m. on the morning of October 17th, when in 45 north latitude, and 12 west longitude, the ship steaming W by S, a large serpent crossed the wake about thirty yards distant. The head, and about six feet of the body, were out of the water and distinctly visible. The head is described as like that of an immense snake. The length of the animal could not be distinctly ascertained, but was considerable.

Comment: Obviously a "long-necked" or "merhorse."

2) Maid of Judah, 1877. The source of this story is an undated clipping from the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> A SEA SERPENT NEAR THE AUSTRALIAN COAST.—The chief officer of the Maid of Judah sends us the following memorandum: "Tuesday, November 20th, 1877. Longitude 121.26 E., latitude 40.2 S., at 11 a.m., while some of the hands were aloft they saw a very large serpent on the weather bow. The vessel passed close to it about forty yards off, and it appeared to be about the length of the vessel: the head of this object appeared to be sunk down out of sight, while a good part of the body and tail was to be seen quite plainly. It was of a browny green colour, and did not appear to have any motion at the time of the vessel passing. There was a fresh gale blowing at the time and a good deal of sea on, yet the thing was broadside on to the sea in curves, as if it was swimming, but the vessel was going faster, and so I could not see if it had any motion."

Comment: The meager information contained in this report makes identification or categorization almost impossible. Mackal (1980) has suggested that such headless, lethargic creatures could be giant salp chains (sub-phylum Tunicata), which tend to grow in cold waters such as prevail in the area of the sighting. The incident has been recorded for its interest value, but it cannot be assumed to relate to a true unknown.

3) Melville Island, 1916. It is characteristic of many "sea serpent" sightings that they are reported only long after the event. Early reports of the Loch Ness Monster inspired a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of April 28, 1934, from a Mr. W. S. Arthur, who claimed to have spent half a century on—or connected with—the sea. On the King's Birthday holiday in June, 1916, he, a trawler skipper called Ned Baxter, and six others crossed the Dundas Strait to Melville Island, off of the Northern Territory, in a 27-foot surf boat:

> About 6.30 pm, most of the men were laid out in the boat in thwarts, and in the bottom of the boat. Baxter was sitting in the bow keeping a lookout for a reef marked on our chart called the Elphinstone Reef, in Latitude 11 degrees 10 South, and long 131.25 degrees E, about 5 miles from Cape Fleeming, Melville Islands S.E. point. [He means N.E. point.] I was steering with the big sweep oar, when Baxter shouted out to me "Whats that just astern there?" I turned sharply, thinking it was rocks when to my surprise, and not more than 30 feet from me, appeared a huge head about 6 ft out of the water, and with 5 or 6 large parts of its body in a straight line with a division between each of them, reaching in all at least 40 feet. As it came nearer I lifted the blade of my oar as high out of the water as I could and tried to hit it on the head, which by this time was only a foot above the water. I missed hitting it, but felt a hard sudden jerk on my oar blade which nearly knocked me over the side. I grabbed the sheet of the sail, or I must have gone over. I looked around again, but could only see its wake windward to our boat. I found 4 teeth, 3 on 1 side and 1 on the other broken off deeply into the ash oar. We extracted them from the oar and kept them as souvenirs, 2 of which are still in my possession.

Comment: The writer concentrated on the small details of the voyage while providing few on the animal itself, which is hardly to be expected of a hoaxer. The animal closely fits the "merhorse" or "long-necked" category. The teeth extracted from the oar may well be the only physical evidence of such an animal, and it is to be regretted that every attempt to locate them has failed.

4) Green Island, 1924. Green Island lies just northeast of Cairns, Queensland, at 16°45′ S, 145°59′ E, and has now become a major Barrier Reef tourist resort. The following account, from an unnamed witness, is from the *Daily Pictorial* of June 16, 1930, and was prompted by the Bellambi Reef and Scarborough sightings documented by Heuvelmans (1968):

> "At Green Island, about 13 miles out from Cairns, in the winter of 1924," he writes, "there rose from the sea part of the body of some animal. It was only a few oars' lengths from the launch, and about nine feet of an arched neck was exposed. With a diameter about 15 inches, its colour was a mottled brown and yellow. The whole body must have been of great length. It was assuredly a member of the serpent order, and not a porpoise, seal, dugong, or tortoise, with all of which I am familiar. Others saw the animal. It was no optical illusion, and there was no liquor on board!"

Comment: Little comment is necessary. This case clearly belongs to the "long-necked" or, possibly, "merhorse" category.

5) Tabourie Lake, 1931. The following report is from *The Moss Vale Post* of February 6, 1931. It appears that the site was the coastal New South Wales town of Tabourie Lake (35°27′ S, 150°24′ E)—rather than the small lake of the same name a few miles to the north—as the animal was reported to have made off for the open sea. In any case, the lake is connected to the sea by a stream only about 2 miles (3 km) long:

> When fishing at Tabourie Lakes recently, Mr. Walter Roots, of Lagoon Street [Goulburn, Victoria], saw a strange sea animal which he is convinced was the much discussed South Coast sea serpent. Mr. Roots was fishing off the rocks when he was surprised to see the creature swimming past in the deep water immediately beneath him. The animal, Mr.

Roots said, was a reddish brown colour and was from 25 to 30 feet long. It had a head resembling a pig and just behind the head were two floppy arms. The body was similar to a huge barrel and the tail was vertical, like a ship's rudder. Most surprising features were the creature's eyes, which were protruding and appeared to be as large as saucers, and its teeth, which were sabre-like, were fully six inches long. Mr. Roots says that the animal dived into the water and rose with a fish in its jaws. The fore part of its body was lifted about five feet from the water and, swaying from side to side, the animal bit the fish in half and after chewing one portion, dived after the other, bringing it to surface and eating it also. In the intervals the animal would roar, like the loud grunt of pig. Mr. Roots says the appearance of the animal was most alarming and the roar added to its terrifying aspect. Messrs. Selby Ayliffe, of Goulburn, and Murray McBean, of Sydney, who were also in the party, did not see the animal, but state that Mr. Roots, who had been in ill health, was most upset after his experience. The animal swam past him just a few feet away and he saw it for fully 25 minutes before it made off towards the open sea.

Comment: A description issued just a few days after the lengthy observation of an animal at close range would be expected to be accurate. In fact, as items 8) and 10) will show, the main defect of newspaper reports is not inaccuracy, but lack of detail. From its shape, behavior, and vocalizations, the animal was most likely a pinniped, but the only species remotely approaching it in size is the southern elephant seal, *Mirounga leonina,* a male of which was once recorded at 22′4″ (McFarlan 1989), and which is the correct color. However, although the male proboscis may make the head appear superficially pig-like, and the hind flippers may occasionally appear to be vertical, it is hard to see how the illusion could be maintained for 25 minutes at such close range. The size of the eyes and fangs, and the position of the front flippers are also discordant. In short, identification with a known species would require more witness error than the circumstances of the sighting would warrant, nor is it easy to fit it into any familiar "sea serpent" category.

6) Coff's Harbour, 1934. The early 1930's saw a surprising number of "sea serpent" reports from eastern Australia. This one comes from the *Sydney Morning Herald* of September 14, 1934. Coff's Harbour is a major northern New South Wales coastal town, situated at 30°18′ S, 153°08′ E:

COFF'S HARBOUR, Thursday.—Charles Blanche and Alfred Jackson, two well-known deep-sea fishermen report that about four miles from Coff's Harbour they saw from their launch yesterday what they at first took to be a log. Then they saw two legs, which were about a foot in diameter, and were about 20 feet apart. They turned their craft about to make a closer inspection, but, when nearing the object, they saw it roll over and a head, which both men declare resembled that of a horse, appeared. With a snort the creature plunged down to the depths, disappearing in a cloud of spray. Blanche and Jackson declare that the monster was up to 40 feet in length, and that in all their years of the sea they had never seen before such a weird-looking sea dweller.

Comment: This is an excellent example of the very poor standard of Australian journalism in the field of cryptozoology. Important details such as distance and viewing conditions are completely absent, and what little information is given is ambiguous. What interpretation, for example, can be put on the legs "20 feet apart"? Was the animal lying on its side?

7) HMAS Kurumba, 1939. On November 23, 1980, the *Sun-Herald* (Sydney) published a review of the book by Heuvelmans (1968), which inspired a letter to the editor, published on November 30, by ex-Leading Seaman Cecil W. Walters about a sighting he had made in 1939. One of us (PC) was able to interview Walters on January 15, 1989. It transpired that he had made notes of the incident in 1969. As these notes include all the details given in the letter to the editor, and since they are over two decades closer to the event, they are transcribed as follows:

About the middle of October 1939, while serving as a gunner on a naval oil tanker proceeding from Darwin, I had what I now realise to be a most remarkable experience in as such as I saw a real sea serpent. As we were app. 2 days out of Darwin there was no question of my sobriety which is always brought up when I speak of this occurrence. What is more I did have one person to corroborate my story, unfortunately he was killed in the war. Perhaps others saw it or we told them of it no doubt, but I do not remember names as I left the ship at Fremantle and have seen no more of them since.

We were somewhere N.W. of King Sound around East Longitude 114°, Lat 20° South W heading South West 10 Knots. It was about 2 bells in the afternoon watch when we sighted the object on the starboard quarter about 4 miles distant overtaking us quite fast on a roughly parallel course. Not being experienced in such matters I can only guess its speed at about 20 knots. I trained the gun on it and looking through the telescope I saw the serpent plainer. It appeared in three half loops thus, 10 feet out of the water 30 feet long from loop to loop. The body thick as a man's and marked exactly like a giraffe, pale blue, green, yellow patches and small ears flat on the head. We watched for about half an hour until it disappeared in the haze on our starboard bow. I decided to write this because of the mention of an anthropologist looking for the sea serpent. (Signed) C. Walters

Included with the notes were a number of sketches (Fig. 1) The following details emerged at the (PC) interview: The time was 2 bells, or 1 pm, the weather fine but hazy, though not sufficient to prevent a clear view of the animal. He and another seaman called Jack Mack were on anti-submarine watch at the stern gun, which was flanked on either side by a telescope. Walters was the first to sight the animal. He called to Mack, who then looked through his own telescope, for they were automatically coordinated to focus on the same object. Being designed for gun-aiming, these telescopes were powerful enough to make the object appear very close, and they obtained a good view of it. It was approximately 4 miles (6.5 km) distant on the starboard quarter, and traveling so fast that at first Walters thought it was a mechanical device. The fact that it produced a bow wave implied that its speed was at least 10 knots, and since it was overtaking the ship, which was itself doing 10 knots, a minimum estimate of its speed would have been 15 knots. Its course was slightly divergent from that of the ship; i.e., southwest rather than south-southwest. For the next half hour, Mack intermittently

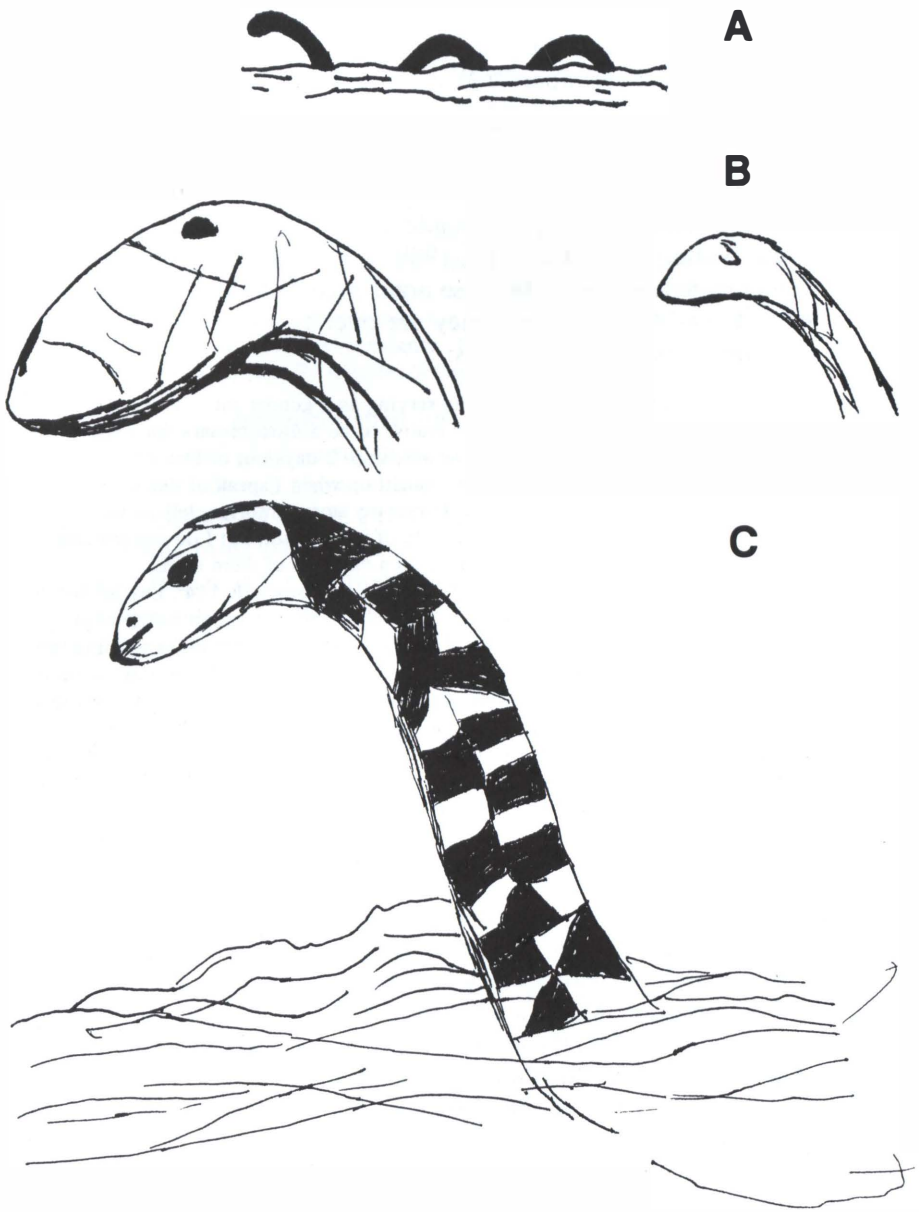

FIG. 1.—Sketches by Cecil W. Walter of the *Kurumba* "sea serpent." A. Original 1969 sketch; B. Preliminary sketches of head; C. Final sketch, probably from 1989.

trained the telescopes on it, while still continuing the anti-submarine watch, up to the maximum forward angle of the gun; eventually, the animal disappeared into the forward haze.

The neck and body were easily as thick as a man's, with the front end an estimated 10 feet (ca. 3 m) out of the water, and a space of about 30 feet (ca. 10 m) between sections. The overall length of the visible parts was thus 90 feet (ca. 27 m). No tail, fins, limbs, or any means of propulsion could be seen. The loops did not move, but maintained the same relative positions throughout.

The background color was a brownish yellow, like a withered leaf, with a multicolored, giraffe-like pattern superimposed, as described in the notes. There were dark greenish patches over the eye and around the nostril, as well as on the ear. He could not see the texture of the skin, but it was definitely organic skin, not a metallic surface. The pattern was like matt paint rather than shiny, but the contrasting colors made it quite distinct.

There was no distinct division between the head and the neck, nor did the head move. The mouth did not open, but the jaws were constantly "working" and a tongue constantly flicking in and out. An eye was visible, and the witness particularly noticed a dainty little ear, which was tucked back behind the eye, but quite definitely an ear.

He does not remember talking about the incident afterwards. Nobody else appears to have seen the animal, and he doubts if the sighting was entered in the log.

Comment: Even if considerable allowance is made for memory distortion due to the lapse of 50 years, this is still a truly remarkable sighting. Whereas animals of a similar shape have been reported before, the multicolored pattern on this creature appears to be unique. The very meager details volunteered in the letter to the newspaper, the notes made for personal reference, and the demeanor of the witness during the interview all argue against it being a hoax. One thing should be noted: if the guns were calibrated for aiming, the estimated distance would be fairly accurate, in which case the overall length, although large, is unlikely to have been exaggerated.

8) Deception Bay, 1959–60. Deception Bay lies just north of Brisbane, Queensland, and is bordered on the north by Bribie Island and on the south by the Redcliffe suburb of Scarborough. In the center of its curve, at approximately 27°09′ S, 153°03′ E, lies the mouth of the Caboolture River. Under the title of "Brisbane SS," Heuvelmans (1968) was able to provide only minimal information about the case. However, it was enough to permit one of us (MS) to contact one of the witnesses, Nigel Tutt, and his daughter, Carol Borck, of Melbourne. In 1989, both submitted independent reports. Tutt also gave a personal interview, drew a sketch (Fig. 2), and provided a collection of contemporary press cuttings.

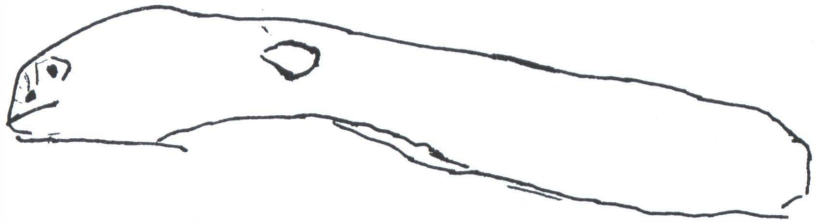

FIG. 2.—Sketch by Nigel Tutt of Deception Bay animal.

On Jan 3, 1960, the *Sunday Truth* (Brisbane) reported that Ron Spencer, 22, who had fished in the bay for 8 years, and had seen dugongs, porpoises, and turtles, claimed to have seen a "monster" five times in the previous 12 months:

> "A huge head came two or three feet out of the water. The monster looked around for a few seconds then dived again with a terrific splash," he told *Truth* last night. "It does not seem to have any neck. But its eyes are very strange and staring. The monster is a brownish colour. . . . Its head is between 18 inches and two feet wide. . . . It comes close to the boat as if it was anxious to look at you, then dives again. . . . But it follows the boat, reappearing every now and then."

His wife, Jeanette, 21, stated that she had seen it 9 months before. Their friend, John Belcher, 22, had seen it 2 weeks before when fishing with Spencer.

On January 10, the same newspaper reported that 10 people had phoned to say they had seen it, and they printed a brief report by Nigel Tutt.

Later, an unidentified Brisbane newspaper reported a sighting at 7:20 a.m. by David Manners, 26, and his mother at Woody Bay (a mere curve of beach on the southern tip of Bribie Island, at the very northern end of Deception Bay):

> "The head is round, something like a man's, at least 2ft. 6in. across and 2ft. long, with a flat nose and sort of semi-detached to the body," he said today. "The body is about 25ft. long. . . . It surfaced about 20 yards off-shore and was clearly visible in the shallow water," he said. "I dropped my rod, and Mum and I followed it at walking pace for about 1½ miles before we went to breakfast. It was a dirty brown color and appeared to have a body about 2ft. across and a queer-looking fin 18ft from the head. It kept surfacing about every 50 yards."

After that, the *Truth* ran a contest for the best Queensland "monster" story. The result was a collection of outrageous "tall stories," though the following may be genuine (*Sunday Truth,* October 10, 1960):

> Mr. E. J. Bailey, of Beaconsfield-terrace, saw a strange beast in the water off Russell Island in Redland Bay [i.e. right next to Brisbane], "like a horse or a hippopotamus, with an arched neck, a short back, that moved through the water with great speed and power."

Then, on October 16, 1960, the newspaper announced the winner of the contest to be Nigel Tutt, and it published his version of the sighting in full:

> "The day I saw the Deception Bay Monster the sky was very clear, the sea calm and the tide full. We were out looking for a fishing spot—myself, my daughter, Carol, now 16, and a girl-friend of hers, Joy Zeller, of Deception Bay. . . . We left from the kiosk and headed to the mouth of the Caboolture River to see the huge flocks of black swans that feed there along the whiting banks. On the way back we headed well offshore, looking for deep-water channels where the big fish might be. We were just on the edge of the shipping channel, and I throttled the engine back, handed the tiller to the girls and went up to the bow to look at the water. . . . Then, suddenly right in front of our bows, a huge, square-shaped head rose up about four feet out of the water. . . . The girls let out a shriek and turned the tiller so hard they nearly tied the boat in three knots. . . . 'Plop'—the head disappeared. When we straightened things out again I felt disappointed at not getting a clearer view of the thing. So I decided to run the launch a couple of circles in case it should surface again. . . . Sure enough , it was most obliging. It came up three more times. In fact, it seemed quite a friendly creature—I'm sure it liked people. Its body was of two shades of brown, in big mottles, and its skin looked lumpy, not scaly. Its head was square-shaped, and hard to describe. But if you've ever seen the boot of a Mayflower car—well, it was something the shape of that. . . . It had a yellow mouth, and appeared to have nostrils.
>
> "As it was acting so friendly, we decided to make for shore and get a camera. So I opened the outboard motor out, and after 10 minutes decided the Monster must have been left behind. . . . But then came the best view we had of him—there he was, curving and gliding calmly along beside the boat and only about 8 ft. away, about 22 ft. long and as thick as a sack of corn, with a fin about 6 ft. to 8 ft. back from his head. I thought, 'Could he be a giant eel, the daddy of them all?,' but an eel swims with a sideways motion, and this fellow was undulating up and down." . . . Nigel says he got a camera, went back out in the launch again, but no Monster! He didn't give up the search, though. "I'm so keen to get a photograph of him," he said, "I've built myself a special dinghy for the search. It's got unsinkable air tanks in it, and a special waterproof compartment in which I keep a camera—fully loaded."

The camera, in fact, was purchased with the 20-guinea prize money. He also won a baby crocodile called Huey, which subsequently died.

The following additional information was provided byTutt and his daughter Carol Borck. The third witness, Joy Zeller, confirmed the event, but was unable to remember much detail. Copies of their written statements have been deposited in the ISC archives.

Circumstances: The sighting lasted about 20 minutes, and occurred about 2 miles (3 km) from the river mouth on New Year's Day, 1960, in water 12 to 40 feet (3.5–12 m) deep. The day was sunny, and the sea was absolutely still.

Length: About 18–20 feet (5.5–6 m) (not 22 feet as recorded in the *Truth*), extending beyond both ends of the boat.

Skin: Extremely coarse, possibly lumpy, and mottled, with the underside of the jaw lighter. Definitely not furred.

Neck: Only a slight constriction behind the head.

Fins: According to Tutt, they were more like paddles, with a definite rigid structure, and were placed somewhat high just behind the neck. In his letter, he said they were "about a foot [30 cm] or a little more each way and rather rounded," but at the interview he suggested they were slightly longer than the head.

Head: Both witnesses agreed that the mouth was very wide, but neither could remember a tongue, teeth, or vibrissae. Tutt stated that the head was 2 feet (60 cm) wide, or perhaps a little more, and almost square, with a truncated muzzle. The eyes were well forward, and the nostrils widely spaced a few inches above the mouth, as in Fig. 2.

Tail: Not clearly seen. Tutt feels it was elongated rather than lobed.

Behavior: Unaggressive. At first its head surfaced almost vertically, but later came up at progressively smaller angles. It swam by means of shallow, vertical undulations, but did not appear to possess humps.

At the end of the interview, Tutt was shown a chart titled "Pinnipeds Around the World" from the April, 1987, edition of *National Geographic* magazine. The only similarities he could see was with the color and general profile of the leopard seal, *Hydrurga leptonyx.* However, the animal he had seen had had a squarer head, thicker neck, and more elongated body. Its fins were rounder, much shorter, and in a different position. It was also twice as long.

Comment: It is quite obvious that all the sightings refer to the same animal. Even the reported behavior was the same. The discrepancy in the position of the fins can be reconciled if we assume that Manning meant "18 inches" (45 cm) rather than "18 feet" (5.5 m) and included the neck with the head. Identifying it is another matter. The vertical undulations reveal it to be a mammal, but no known pinniped or cetacean fits the description. There are geographical problems in relating it to previously defined "sea serpent" types. The greatest similarity is with the "super-otter" which, according to Heuvelmans (1968), is found only in the North Atlantic, and has not been seen since 1848. Another possibility is Heuvelmans' "many-humped," especially as it is sometimes reported as bearing a small shoulder fin. However, its provenance is also the North Atlantic, and, like the "super-otter," it is two or three times the size of the Deception Bay animal. Perhaps an even closer correspondence is with the *naitaka* of the west Canadian coast and lakes, which Mackal (1980) believes to be relict archaeocetes. The naked skin of the Deception Bay animal would tend to indicate a cetacean rather than a pinniped. In either case, the unusual "fins" are unexplained.

This case has two postscripts. Firstly, the same area became the center of further sightings in 1962. These are reported by Heuvelmans (1968) as the Bribie Island and Brisbane "sea serpents," and at least one belonged to the quite different "long-necked" variety. This may also have appeared in the past, because when Tutt won the "monster" contest the *Sunday Truth* published a further comment:

> Another story this week came to us from New South Wales—from Mrs. M. L. Carr, a former Queenslander, now living at Williamtown Air Force Base. She told us about a Monster she once saw in the water on a reef near Bribie Island, "with a big body and neck, poised as if staring up at me."

Secondly, during the interview, Tutt casually mentioned seeing a tiger-like animal in southeast Queensland in 1940. The sighting had taken place in mid-morning at a distance of no more than 10 yards (ca. 10 m). Upon being questioned, he produced an account of the incident which he had written for the benefit of his daughter. The details were confirmed by a second witness, his brother Charles. Incredible as it may seem, Nigel Tutt has observed both marine and terrestrial unknown species—at close range under perfect viewing conditions. He may well be the only person alive with that distinction.

9) Maningrida, 1972. Maningrida is a major settlement in the Northern Territory Aboriginal reserve known as Arnhem Land. On June 23, 1972, the community's newsletter, the now-defunct *Maningrida Mirage* (Vol. 142) carried a report of an outlandish monster which thrashed the sea into foam and made:

> a sustained high pitched moaning, a cross between the howl of a dingo and a bellowing elephant. It was not possible to ascertain the creature's exact colour except that it was generally dark, but there appeared to be glistening sections as the sun was being reflected from incredibly large metallic-like scales. As fantastic as it seemed then and does now in retrospect, it was felt by the two fishermen, that the creature's head, if it could be called that, was in fact in three sections, almost similar to the sections on a three-bladed propeller with all parts being centrally attached to the body.

Sixteen years after the event, one of us (MS) wrote to Maningrida and was referred to Dan Guillespie of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, who stated:

> As I recall that story was written as a practical joke by a school teacher. If it is attributed to me this was done in error. These kinds of ruses are perennial up here—the results of a combination of the vigorous climate & overindulgence in strong drink.

Comment: The vagueness of the circumstances of the sighting and the extravagance of the description both point to a hoax. It is only included here to set the record straight, as versions of the story understating the fantastic elements appeared in capital city newspapers, and so are likely to turn up in later anthologies.

10) Aireys Inlet, 1973. This incident took place about 2.5 miles (4 km) southwest of Aireys Inlet, Victoria, which is situated at 38°28′ S, 144°06′ E, roughly 60 miles (96 km) southwest in a direct line from Melbourne. The witnesses were Neil Blyth, a 25-year-old architect, and his father-in-law, Norman Robertson, whose skill in estimating size and distance dates from his Air Force work in World War II. The sighting occurred at 3:30 p.m. on June 3, 1973. According to the *Geelong Advertiser* for June 4, 1973:

Mr. Blyth said last night: "All of a sudden there was this hissing noise, then out of the water came this snake-like thing about seven or eight feet high." Mr. Blyth said the "snake" was nine inches thick, rose out of a swelling surf, about 150 feet from their boat. They had a clear view of it. It had a small, "dog-like" head. "It just sat up seven feet or so in the water—it was really weird," he said. "It just sort of slid up and stayed there for two or three seconds, then slid down again." Mr. Blyth said the "monster" hardly moved. He said he and his father-in-law immediately sketched what they saw and both drawings were similar. Mr. Robertson also described the "monster" as a black snake-like object. "It sat there for the odd second, then just slid back the same way as he came up," he said. "I thought at first it was the tail of a whale coming out of the water. Then I saw a blob on the end of it which was obviously a head."

The next day, the newspaper published a sketch made by Robertson at the time (Fig. 3).

Fourteen and a half years after the event, a questionnaire was sent to both witnesses by one of us (MS), and the resultant answers, although very similar, were clearly independent. Again, copies have been submitted to the ISC archives.

Viewing Conditions: About 0.5 miles (ca. 800 m) offshore on a fine, dull winter's day, with swells 4 to 5 feet (1.2–1.5 m) high, without white caps, and troughs perhaps twice the length of the boat. When a swell rears towards breaking point, a hissing sound is quite audible. So when a hissing sound was heard, Robertson assumed that an extra large swell was approaching. He looked up to see the creature appear. The sighting lasted about three seconds.

Color and Texture: Black and shiny (in a dull light).

Head: No constricture at the neck. Blyth claimed that the head was tapered, but Robertson considered it to be blunt. No eyes were visible.

Dimensions: Both recorded their impressions an hour or so after the event. Blyth estimated a neck 9 inches (23 cm) thick and 6 feet (1.8 m) out of the water, at a lesser angle than Robertson, whose figures were 12 inches (30 cm) and 9 feet (2.7 m) respectively. Considering the height of the swells, it is probably safer to accept the larger estimates.

Behavior: It rose gracefully with a slight "S" movement, did not appear to notice the men, and slid back like a periscope without a splash.

Robertson added a further comment: "Two separate and unreported events occurred at Aireys Inlet about 2 hours before our sighting. A woman at the Aireys Inlet store (about 400 yards [ca. 365 m] in from the beach) observed an unusual dark object moving along the surface of the water parallel with the shore towards the direction of Eastern View. Also, about the same time, my wife was on an Aireys beach when a large number of fish (from memory, mullet and garfish) were tossing themselves onto the beach. I think this also occurred on other nearby beaches."

Comment: Despite the brevity of the sighting, the poor viewing conditions, and the lapse of years, this must be considered an excellent sighting. The details cannot easily be attributed to any known species. Moreover, the angle of the object and its very brief appearance would rule out the other obvious explanation, a submarine periscope. However, the description fits perfectly Heuvelmans' "long-necked" sea serpent, observed all over the world's oceans and in many inland waters (cf Costello 1974, Dinsdale 1966).

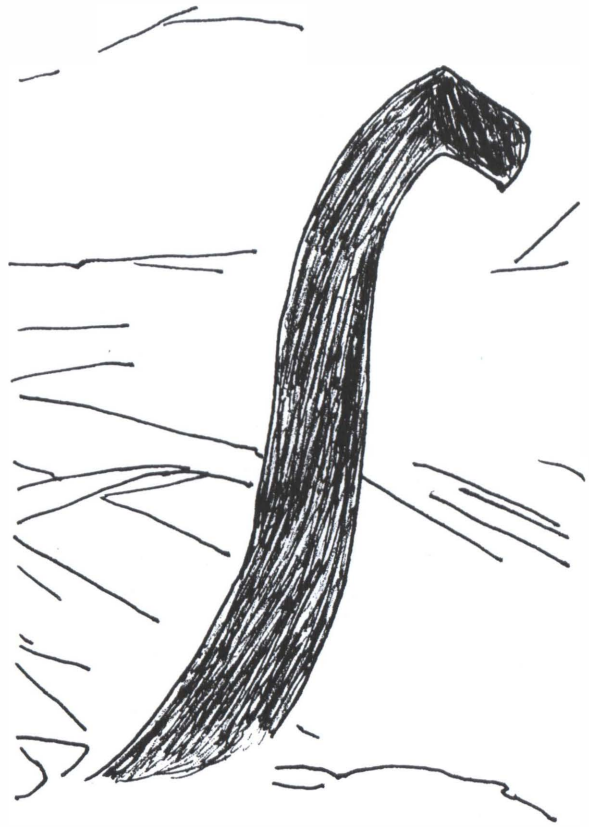

FIG. 3.—Sketch by Norman Robertson of the Aireys Inlet "sea serpent."

11) Bynoe Harbor, 1977, 1978. Bynoe Harbor is the long, narrow inlet immediately southwest of Port Darwin, Northern Territory, at approximately 12°41′ S, 130°34′ E. The primary report of the sightings is a front page story in the Northern Territory's largest daily newspaper, *The Northern Territory News* (Darwin), for February 2, 1980. Burge Brown, a beach sand prospector, claimed that the harbor was a breeding ground for plesiosaurs, which he had seen during the previous seven years, always during the wet season, December through February. The last time was on a fishing trip two years before:

> The day was still and the fish had been biting when, without any apparent reason, fish and sea snakes began leaping out of the water. Mr Brown said soon after this he saw the monster heading down the harbor like a "submarine." The creature had a tail and front like an elephant's trunk with pairs of dorsal-like fins running down the length of its back. It was the pairs of fins which fascinated Mr Brown most—they were not rigid but "flopped about." Police Sergeant, Kevin Maley, was one of the five people in the boat with Mr Brown that day. "It was the most incredible thing you have ever seen in your life," he said. "It was black, about 30m long with a head the size of a football," Sgt Maley said. Sgt Maley said the monster appeared soon after the sea became alive with marine life and kept within 20 m of the boat for about 20 minutes. It did not appear vicious and stared at the boat and its human occupants.

Jack Davis, who was in a boat in a different part of the harbor, was able to confirm the disturbance in the water. The year before that, according to Brown, he and his son, Geoffrey, had heard a bellow like a bull being branded:

> "About 15 minutes later I looked over and saw there were three of them—the big one had to be 30m." The three monsters were about 800m away so Mr Brown used his field glasses on them.

Burge Brown is now deceased. However, in November, 1989, one of us (MS) was able to contact Sgt. (now Chief Inspector) Maley, who provided the following details: The animal surfaced within 65 feet (20 m) of their boat and just lay there—neither shy nor aggressive—for about 20 minutes before submerging. Its length was more like 25 feet (7.5 m) rather than the reported 100 feet (ca. 30 m), and there were no obvious humps. There was a triple (not double) row of triangular serrations along the back, not unlike those on a crocodile's back, except that they were floppy and about 6 inches (15 cm) in size. The neck was about 8 to 10 feet (2.5–3 m) long, with a vertical "S" bend "like a sewage pipe," but close to the surface. He could not remember any details of the head. He is convinced that the animal was not a crocodile, dugong, turtle, or shark.

Comment: Inspector Maley's testimony brings down to earth a newspaper report which reads like a fisherman's "tall story." The journalist was obviously short on interviewing skills since, despite the sensationalism of the report, its information content is quite low. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to rule out any known species. Despite the unusual feature of the dorsal serrations, the animal should perhaps be grouped with the "long-necked" kind of "sea serpents" rather than the "many-finned," which are more often described as short-necked with larger serrations.

12) Larrekeyah, late 1940's. The previous report prompted a response, which was published in *The Northern Territory News* on February 15, 1980. This sighting apparently took place in Darwin Harbor itself, as the Larrekeyah Barracks are just west of the downtown area. R. M. Richardson of Batchelor wrote to say that, 30 years before, he had been walking along the cliff near

the barracks when he realized that what he had thought were three logs, about 26 feet (8 m) long, were in fact alive and swimming:

> "One raised its head which was serpent like, reminding me of a tiger snake ready to strike," he said.

A few days later, he was in Government House and he mentioned it to Mick Driver, who was Administrator for the period 1946–50. The latter said he knew of the animals, which reportedly visited the waters only intermittently.

Comment: The information content of this report is minimal, but sufficient to eliminate any known species. The size alone would rule out any of the snakes known from the area, and nothing else could even remotely approach the description. We can relate the animals to the "long-necked" kind of "sea serpents" or "merhorses," and they could well be the same as the Bynoe Harbor beasts.

13) Darwin, 1980. Five days later, on February 20, 1980, the same newspaper printed another front page report.

At about 11 a.m., the newspaper received a call from Terry Annesley and John Hamilton, employees of Eagle Insurance. Journalists Fred McCue and Dave Trounce and photographer Keith Scott joined them on the sixth floor to watch with binoculars:

> a dark body about 15m long with what appeared to be dorsal fins breaking the surface. . . . Trounce said he saw several fins burst through the surface, at one stage five at a time. "They appeared to be all on the back of a single eel-like object, but it was too far away to be sure," he said.

Unfortunately, the distance of about 1 kilometer (over 3,000 ft) was too far to use the camera.

It might seem more than a coincidence that such an animal should appear at such an opportune time. However, one of us (PC) was able to make telephone contact with Terry Annesley and discuss the incident. At the time of the sighting, he had been on the third floor (or fourth floor according to American usage) of the Hooker Building, located at the edge of the Harbor. The sighting took place some time between 10 a.m. and noon. He was the first person to notice the object, which was moving from the direction of Bynoe Harbor towards the shore in front of the building. It seemed to be moving at about the same speed as a whale. He watched it for about two minutes before alerting a fellow worker, John Hamilton. Both then watched it for some time.

The creature looked identical to sketches he had seen of the Loch Ness Monster, with several loops ("something like a half car tire") sitting high out of the water. There appeared to be a total of five or six loops, but this number constantly changed, and at least once only three were visible. He

stated that the length of each loop above the water appeared to be the same as the distance between the loops under the water. At no stage were less than three loops visible. The animal's total length was bout 65 feet (20 m), and its skin appeared black. By the time the journalists arrived, the animal was heading away from their position and towards the mouth of Darwin Harbor.

Apparently, the journalists were in total shock, with the photographer angry that he had not brought a sufficiently powerful telephoto lens. They all watched it for about half an hour, using binoculars, until it disappeared from view. Annesley is convinced that it was not a manta ray or a school of dolphins, and because of the way it moved he is certain it was only a single animal.

Comment: The description of this animal, although sketchy, is not immediately reconcilable with that of any known species. The animal appears to have been moving by vertical undulations, and so was presumably a mammal. It may have belonged to "many-finned" variety of "sea serpent." In any case, considering the proximity in time and space, it was probably of the same species as the Bynoe Harbor beasts. If so, there is hope that, eventually, it will make a further visit.

14) Ramat Bay, 1958, 1981. Ramat Bay is an inlet only a few hundred feet wide on the eastern shore of the island of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, at 3°35′ S, 152°22′ E. These sighting reports have not been published before. They are based on 1983 interviews with the witnesses, Bernie Gash, an expatriate Englishman, and his native wife, by J. Richard Greenwell, who has kindly provided the information to the authors. Gash, who operates coconut plantations in southern New Ireland, lives in Namatanai, but also has a plantation house on a hill overlooking Ramat Bay approximately 8 miles (13 km) to the north.

The first sighting occurred between 9:30 and 10 a.m. on a day in August, 1958, and lasted 3–4 minutes. The animal, which was moving at about 5–6 knots, came into the bay to within a few hundred feet of the shore, turned, and moved out. The body appeared to be about 50 feet (15 m) long, and consisted of four gray-green loops spaced about 10 feet (3 m) apart. It had a frill along its back. No head was visible, but a vertical, segmented tail about 2 feet (60 cm) long was noted. The second sighting took place on April 26, 1981. The whole family was present, and Gash and his wife were interviewed separately about the incident. The time was about 5:15 p.m., the distance about 600–900 feet (ca. 180–275 m). They first saw a neck 10–15 feet (3–4.5 m) long and 2 feet (60 cm) wide, with a head like a python's (Fig. 4A). It appeared black because of the distance and the fading light, which turned it into a silhouette. They watched it for 2–3 minutes, until it splashed down and submerged. Three minutes later, they observed three small loops (Fig. 4B shows four) rolling along until they sank.

Gash's son, Edward, who was 11 in 1983, reported that he had seen the

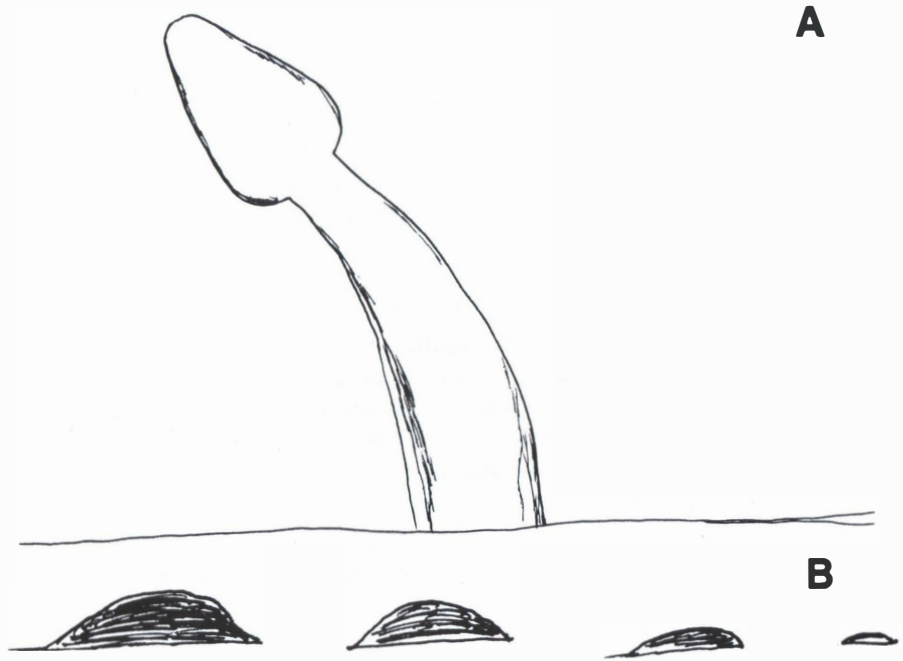

FIG. 4.—Sketches by Bernie Gash of the Ramat Bay "sea serpent." A. First appearance; B. Second appearance 3 minutes later.

animal seven times in the years 1981–83, probably because he lived in the plantation house overlooking Ramat Bay itself. Greenwell also interviewed 12 Barok tribesmen at the nearby village of Kolanabai, American anthropologist Roy Wagner acting as translator. They claimed to know the animal, and called it *ah-een-meelow,* meaning "the fish eel." They stated that they sometimes see it far out to sea on both sides of the island when fishing. It was said to be dark in color and to undulate vertically.

Comment: Two sightings made in the same area 23 years apart should not automatically be assumed to refer to the same species, but a continuing tradition among the indigenous people would tip the balance in favor of such an interpretation. Also, the two sightings have much in common, even though the dorsal frill was absent from the second report. Factors such as age, sex, season, and viewing conditions would easily explain the discrepancy.

Relating it to other "sea serpent" reports is not so easy. Readers of Heuvelman's (1968) compendium will know that the combination of multiple humps, long neck, and large head is not often reported, least of all from tropical seas. The "long-necked" kind of "sea serpent," for instance, pos-

sesses the first characteristics, but its head is usually described as having the same thickness as its neck and set at an angle to it. Also, it does not normally splash when submerging. Of course, the "neck" of the Ramat Bay animals might have been simply the anterior end of the body, but, if so, it is strange that it should have been held more or less vertically for 2–3 minutes. Like the Bynoe Harbor monsters, these creatures must be considered isolated unknowns. In fact, considering the lack of details in the Bynoe Harbor reports, they may well refer to the same species.

Conclusions

What can be learned from this disparate collection of reports? Firstly, even when due allowance is made for faulty observations, memories, and reporting, and for undetected hoaxes, it seems that several quite different animal species unknown to science have been visiting Australasian waters. Furthermore, some of them appear to be quite new even to the field of cryptozoology, and some of the strangest are also the best attested. The general form of many of these, and the references to vertical undulations, suggests that they, at least, are mammals, possibly archaeocetes or pinnipeds.

Secondly, newspaper accounts are woefully inadequate, but cross-checking with the original witnesses reveals that what information they do provide is usually accurate. The memories of a witness, on the other hand, tend to remain vivid even decades after the event. In the future, therefore, every effort should be made to locate such witnesses.

Thirdly, notwithstanding the above, newspapers still remain the major source of "sea serpent" reports, and the source is far from exhausted. It must be emphasized that Australia is a continent. Capital cities are hundreds of miles apart, and public libraries, even in the capitals, will maintain only a small selection of country newspapers even from their own state. Issues published before the Second World War are particularly hard to find.

At the time of the Aireys Inlet sighting, some journalists claimed that Gabo Island, near the New South Wales-Victoria border, had been the focus of unusual sightings for years. It has not been possible to follow up this lead, nor the rumors of sightings near the Hawkesbury River mouth in 1975–76. Even many of the "classic" cases need following up, as frequently the reports published in anthologies were based on second-hand rather than original accounts. The Deception Bay sightings of 1960 are good examples of how much additional information can be unearthed by a local investigator.

Furthermore, Heuvelmans quotes a number of sightings of which virtually nothing is known: the Mourilyan, Mackay, and *Rahata* sightings of 1934, and the John Kentworth sighting of 1962. The 1934 sightings at least are known to have been reported in various North Queensland newspapers, but they have not yet been located. The search is also still in progress for the original account of the Bellambi Reef sighting of 1930. Anyone who lives

in an area with access to these records would be in a position to make a worthwhile contribution to cryptozoology.

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